

SIMMONS COLLEGE LIBRARY

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

Edited by  
W. B. STEVENSON

VOLUME XXXVII  
1944

LONDON  
THE ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)  
1945

*Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney Ltd.,  
London and Aylesbury.*

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

---

HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON

Hornsey Public Libraries

---

## Editorial

OUR readers will hear with regret of the death, on 13th October, 1943, of Mr. William Procter, who had retired from the position of Deputy City Librarian, Leeds, only thirteen days previously. He was 67 years of age. Mr. Procter was a very early member of the A.A.L. (or Library Assistants' Association, as it was then called) and served as Honorary Treasurer of the Yorkshire Division from 1907 to 1939, a record which must be unique in the A.A.L. After serving as Librarian-in-Charge of the Armley Branch Library, Leeds, for a number of years, he was appointed Deputy City Librarian in 1927. Mr. Gordon had just been appointed City Librarian, and under his dynamic leadership, Mr. Procter gave valuable and loyal assistance in the complete re-organisation of the Leeds library system. He had a quiet, lovable personality and showed great human qualities in his dealings with the staff. His death will be regretted by a wide circle of professional colleagues in Yorkshire.

\*\*\*

Our Correspondence pages are unusually full this month: we welcome letters from our colleagues in the Forces, especially on Post-War problems.

\*\*\*

*Correction.*—In "Valuations," printed in the last issue of the *Library Assistant*, it was stated that "the lectures and art exhibitions at Mansfield attracted an average attendance of 230." Mr. F. E. Cronshaw points out that the fourteen lectures held attracted *total* audiences of 3,787, and the thirteen art exhibitions attracted a *daily* average of 230.

\*\*\*

## Announcements

### Revision Courses

Students are reminded that applications for the Revision Courses in classification and cataloguing must reach Mrs. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, by 20th February, after which date no application will be accepted. Under present conditions students would help considerably by sending in their applications as early as possible. These Revision Courses are intended only for students

## The Library Assistant

who have previously sat for the Intermediate Examination. In no circumstances will any other application be considered.

### Ordinary Courses

Courses in all sections will be arranged to run from April to May of the following year.

Students wishing to enter for any course must obtain an application form and send it, together with the necessary fee, to Mrs. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24. Applications must reach the above before the 20th March, after which date no application will be accepted.

Full particulars of subjects and fees, see the *Library Association Year Book*.

## Council Notes

The A.A.L. Council met on 10th November, 1943, the President, Mr. F. M. Gardner in the chair.

The Council, having considered the publication by the Library Association of "Proposals for Post-War Re-organisation" in pamphlet form and the Suggestions for future professional training (*Library Association Record*, October, 1943), took the following action. A formal protest was sent to the Library Association Council in the following terms :—

"The Council of the A.A.L., while not necessarily hostile to the Library Association Proposals, wishes to register the strongest possible protest against the method by which such far-reaching proposals were forwarded to the Press and to the public before members as a whole had had any chance to see what the proposals were. As the McColvin Report, which was the basis of the Proposals, had already been very fully discussed by Branches and Sections, very little time would have been lost if the method chosen had been the more democratic one of circulating the Proposals to Branches and Sections as an Interim Report before final publication. The Council further considers that until the Proposals have been formally adopted by an Annual Meeting, it is improper and misleading for them to be published as final proposals."

The Planning Committee of the Library Association was to be asked to appoint nine members of the A.A.L. Council to the proposed Sub-Committees. (It should be noted that the Hon. Secretary has since ascertained that six of the nine were already on the Planning Committee's lists.)

The Divisions were to be asked to discuss the "Proposals" and the Suggestions and to forward their observations to the Hon. Secretary for presentation to the February Council Meeting. Divisional opinion was to be ascertained as to the desirability of requesting the Library Association to call a special general meeting to consider all these post-war proposals.

A resolution was also forwarded to the Library Association suggesting that an annual nominal subscription of 5s. should be paid by all members of H.M. Forces for the entire period of military service, such subscription serving to retain membership.

The Council received with regret the resignation of Mr. F. M. Gardner as President

## The Library Assistant

of the Association and of Mr. J. T. Gillett as Honorary Treasurer, and expressed their keen appreciation of the valuable services rendered by each of these officers. The Association will still have the benefit of their assistance in 1944, however, as Mr. Gillett becomes President and Mr. Gardner is still able to serve as a co-opted member of the Council. No ballot was necessary for the nationally elected Councillors as the number of nominations balanced the number of vacancies. The Council for 1944 will consist therefore of the following, with the addition of the Divisional Representatives :—

### *Honorary Officers of the Association*

President : Mr. J. T. Gillett, F.L.A. (Leeds).  
Vice-President : Mr. A. Ll. Carver, A.L.A. (Portsmouth).  
Hon. Treasurer : Mr. E. Wisker, F.L.A. (Gillingham).  
Hon. Editor : Mr. W. B. Stevenson, F.L.A. (Hornsey).  
Hon. Secretary : Miss E. M. Exley, F.L.A. (St. Marylebone).

### *Officers of the Council*

Hon. Education Secretary : Mrs. S. W. Martin.  
Hon. Librarian : Miss B. F. Nevard, F.L.A. (Lambeth).  
Hon. Membership Secretary : Miss M. Pitts, F.L.A. (Willesden).

### *Nationally-elected Councillors*

Mr. A. Ll. Carver, A.L.A. (Portsmouth).  
Miss W. M. Heard, A.L.A. (Chiswick).  
Miss S. P. T. Jacka, F.L.A. (Edmonton).  
Miss M. B. Jones, F.L.A. (St. Pancras).  
Miss C. Madden, F.L.A. (Willesden).  
Mr. H. W. Marr (Sheffield).  
Miss M. Noble, F.L.A. (Nottingham).  
Mr. W. H. Phillips, F.L.A. (Dagenham).

## Fiction in 1943

### W. B. Stevenson

**M**ANY of the books of 1943 will have reached the limbo of "o.p." by the time this article appears, but it is worth while taking stock of the year's output. Writers have been increasingly occupied with war themes—that is as it should be; one or two new writers have emerged—that we should expect; and a few novels are worthy of survival—unusual enough in any year.

It is to be expected that the detective story is going into eclipse: in a world of violence the detective story seems tame indeed, and only the unusual will be successful. Ngaio Marsh's *Colour scheme* (Collins, 8s. 6d.) is unusual, both in its method and its setting. The scene is a thermal establishment in New Zealand; the body conveniently disappears into boiling mud; the discovery turns on a nice point of colour; while the detective makes his appearance only in the last paragraph. The characters are good, the scenery authentic; this is one of the best of Miss Marsh's distinguished stories. J. R. Langham, whose *A pocketful of clues* (Hale, 8s. 6d.) is set in one of the

## The Library Assistant

lesser Californian towns, has a detective who is a pre-war hard-boiled egg. The humour is insolent, the corpses numerous, and the slang infectious; like Mr. Warner, we can't help laughing at this, the most cheerful "blood" of the year. A good anthology of *American detective stories* (Pilot Press, 6s.) gives a taste of the various flavours of the American "Whodunit" from the had-I-but-known school of Mignon Eberhart to the knock-them-down and drag-them-out of Dashiell Hammett. Poe's *Purloined letter*, stories by Post, Futrelle, and Ellery Queen make up a good collection. Hammett's Sam Spade is still the best of them. But, as Maurice Richardson says in his introduction, "Perhaps if you want to make quite sure of remaining sane, it is better not to read detective stories at all, but if so you will miss a lot of guilty pleasures and unclean fun."

Just so; and as we read Simenon's *Escape in vain* (Routledge, 8s. 6d.) we find ourselves in a very unheroic world, a world of criminals, but no detection, a world of pursuit and terror. Simenon, for all his tremendous output, is an able writer, and two of his best stories are in this volume. Again, in Grahame Greene's *Ministry of fear* (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.) we are in a queer half world, where the winning of a cake in a lottery may mean a pursuit by fifth columnists. Grahame Greene always writes well. Here he is in lighter vein; the story has, inevitably, been filmed in Hollywood. I hope by Hitchcock. Helen McInnes' *Assignment in Brittany* (Harrap, 9s.) has already been filmed; but the book has a solidity and logic that the film lacked. It is the story of a British intelligence officer, Richard Herne, who impersonates a Frenchman, Bertrand Corley. The Nazis come to the Breton village of St. Deodat, Richard falls in love; complications and excitement follow, ending in a thrilling chase across the sands of Mont. St. Michel and escape to Britain. Granted the initial impersonation, the book is convincing in its development, strong in character study, and full of excitement. The comparison of Buchan suggests itself, and Miss McInnes comes off well. Michael Home's *City of the soul* (Methuen, 8s. 6d.) is the third of the series that began with *The place of little birds*. One can scarcely class these books as thrillers, for they are written soberly, but they have plenty of excitement and contemporary appeal. Michael Home obviously knows the desert and its ways, and we are sorry to leave his characters, Brice, Marigny and Mathers, at the end of three unusual books.

The psychological novel is well represented this year by both American and English writers. Carson McCullers' *The heart is a lonely hunter* (Cresset Press, 9s. 6d.) is a study of a small southern town in America, by one of the most interesting of recent regional writers. A slow-moving book, restrained in action and building up to a climax, it will be no disappointment to those who admired *Reflections in a golden eye*. It is interesting to compare her negroes and poor whites with those of Faulkner; here the violence of language is missing, the characters less morbid; the result is more convincing as a picture of the deep South. As a contrast there has been the urban sophistication of Mary McCarthy's *The company she keeps* (Ivor Nicholson, 8s. 6d.). A scaring revelation of oneself is to be found when confronted by the multiple mirrors of a tailor's fitting-room; Miss McCarthy uses a similar method in building up the portrait of her central character. Each of six linked episodes gives a different aspect of Margaret; in the final scene she confesses to a psychiatrist. This is a most intelligent book, rather horrifying at times, but perceptive and adroitly written. The intellectuals of Bloomsbury are the characters of Philip Toynbee's *The barricades* (Putnam, 8s. 6d.); the background, the years 1937-38. Rawlins, the schoolmaster of *School in private*, is dismissed, and sets himself adrift among the rich and the intellectual. The barricades are those of the mind only, the conflict of the sophisticate with his

## The Library Assistant

environment, his half-hearted attempt to come to terms with the issues of world politics without the compromise of his individuality. We know the Rawlinses and Markhams, and though this novel doesn't solve their problems, it illuminates them. This is an excellent novel. The interior monologue is all very well, but there has seldom been such excessive use of it as in Richard Llewellyn's *None but the lonely heart* (Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d.). Here is a story of the slums, of one of the "wide-boys," his ideals, his frustrations, and his attempts to get away from his environment. It is brilliantly written, a real *tour-de-force* in fact, but I found it synthetic, lacking in the passion of *How green was my valley*. Compare the dialogue, for instance, with that of *Caught* (Hogarth Press, 8s. 6d.), a story of the National Fire Service; for Henry Green's dialogue is so authentic that it almost becomes reporting. Green is one of our most significant writers: he has a sense of reality, enormous versatility, and a style both simple and subtle. Arthur Koestler's *Arrival and departure* (Cape, 7s. 6d.) proves again that here we have a first-rate novelist. It is the story of Peter Slavek, a refugee. Safe at last in a neutral country, he suffers a nervous and physical breakdown. His story is revealed in his confessions to a psychiatrist. The main theme of the book, however, is the political and psychological issues of the struggle against Fascism; here once more is Toynbee's dilemma of the individualist. With Koestler, the issues are more clear cut, and the approach more realistic. I have rarely read anything more horrifying than the "mixed transport" episode in this book: it shows, once for all, the lengths to which Nazism can go. *Arrival and departure* is not for escapists, but it probably represents the high-water mark of the year's fiction.

Rex Warner's *Why was I killed* (Lane, 7s. 6d.) has none of that surrealist fantasy we associate with this author, for it is an allegory, of an unusual kind. A dead soldier visits the Unknown Warrior's tomb in an abbey; there he meets a group of people who discuss the purpose of war; while the soldier looks into their minds, seeking the reason for his death. These people are, quite deliberately, types—the man who fought in Spain, the woman in love, the capitalist, the *debrouillard*; in none of them does the soldier find the answer to his question. Only in the priest, who shares the vision of every soldier, he finds a glimpse of the reality behind war. Here is a moving and profound book, simple in style and poetic in quality. Phyllis Bottome's *Within the cup* (Faber, 8s. 6d.) is the diary of an Austrian doctor, a refugee in England. Driven from Austria by his wife's defection to the Nazis, he tells the story of his life in England and his gradual understanding of the English, during three years of war. This is a book of quiet charm and considerable insight, interpreting both the refugee's mind and that of his host. Turning to France we have had three novels dealing with that country, occupied and unoccupied. Storm Jameson's *Cloudless May* (Macmillan, 10s. 6d.) is a book written with sympathy and understanding of the French people, yet it never, to my mind, comes to life. I preferred, for all its nervous tension and its mental hair-splitting, Kay Boyle's *Primer for combat* (Faber, 8s. 6d.). The author has returned quite recently from unoccupied France, and the book is a diary, written by a woman of French nationality, married to an American. There is an Austrian refugee who finally decides to conform to Nazism; there is a tense and unhappy love affair, but there is also the spirit of France and the growth of her people's resistance, and many pictures of France torn between de Gaulle and Vichy; this is a bitter and intense book, well worth reading. Louis Bromfield's *Until the day break* (Cassell, 8s. 6d.) is a glorious technicolour (or it will be) picture of Paris under the Nazis. The style is highflown, the characters gaudy (they are either intellectual, rich, sensual or sinister, sometimes a combination of all four). Nevertheless, the book has vigour and excitement, and

## The Library Assistant

carries one along to the end. If Bromfield is colourful, Wanda Wassilewska's *Rainbow* (Hutchinson, 8s. 6d.) is sombre. This novel, which won the Stalin Prize for 1943, is the story of an occupied village in the Ukraine. This is a terrible book; but the reality is more terrifying: the Kharkhov trials have shown it. The delicate, who still retain some nice feelings, had better not read *Rainbow*, for they might learn what Fascism really means. Feuchtwanger's *The Lautensack brothers* (Hamish Hamilton, 9s.) takes us into Nazi Germany in the years of Hitler's rise to power. Oscar Lautensack is a necromantist, Hansjörg his brother and manager. With calm irony Feuchtwanger dissects the Nazis and their satellites—the mystics, the sensualists, the greedy, the brutes. A brilliant book, by a master of his subject.

The books by British writers on war themes are quieter in tone. Priestley's *Daylight on Saturday* (Heinemann, 9s. 6d.) is a collective novel, the story of a factory and its workers. Priestley has done his job well, character after character is swiftly drawn; the production manager with his James Burnham notions, the foreman, the frustrated female welfare officer. In a book so close to reality, the climax seems forced and melodramatic; but the book is the Priestley of the *Postscripts* rather than of the *Good companions*, and contains some good solid writing. Nigel Balchin's *The small back room* (Collins, 8s. 6d.) is a novel of the research workers in an unnamed Ministry. It is the story of Sammy Rice, a technician, his efforts to orient himself to work and to a love affair. The background is a sea of feuds and departmental jealousies, of committees and sub-committees, and of men trying to do good work while swaddled in red tape. The climax is one of great excitement, with Sammy trying to neutralise a booby-trap; in doing it, he finds himself. The style of the book is terse; the capacity to make scientific detail interesting is rare: Nigel Balchin has it and his book is an absorbing one. From the back-room boys to the commandos we go with John Brophy's *Spear head* (Collins, 8s. 6d.). Here, again, the technical detail is excellent, the action superb, but the love affair is a sad come-down, and mars a very interesting book. C. S. Forester's *The ship* (Michael Joseph, 8s. 6d.) is yet another example of scientific detail superbly handled. It is the story of a cruiser action in the Mediterranean, and from the opening, with the commander arranging a meal for his men, to the last page, with the action completed, we live for a time in a world full of speed and precision; the ship and its men seem to be one sentient being, yet each rating and officer stands out as an individual. This is a fine piece of writing, by a craftsman who knows his job and his subject—the most exciting war book I have read.

Europe before the war is the subject of Upton Sinclair's *Wide is the gate* (Werner Laurie, 12s. 6d.), the continuation of the series of novels of which Lanny Budd is the hero. This is an astonishing book in its sweep and detail; Sinclair is able to write of most of the crises of the years 1934–38 as if he had been present; Hitler, Mussolini, Goering and Zaharoff are as much characters of the novel as are the members of the Barnes and Budd families. Lanny travels afresh, he sells more pictures, he loses his wife and finds another; all this is subsidiary, however, to the immense panorama of a Europe moving towards war. Here is history without tears, a story of reality and suspense, of escapes from the Gestapo, of the Spanish War. Sinclair, the "romantic revolutionary," as Mr. Kazin calls him, writes with immense knowledge and vivacity; this chronicle of our own times is unique.

Other American novels this year may appear puny compared with Sinclair's immense book; they cover a narrower field, but one or two of them are worthy of note. The most sober of them is at the same time the most convincing—James Gould Cozzens' *The just and the unjust* (Cape, 9s. 6d.). It is the story of a trial in a small town; most



## The Library Assistant

of the book is a verbatim report of the evidence, noted down by the assistant district attorney. The background is of ordinary happenings—a picnic, a love affair—yet this quiet little book provides us with a microcosm of America, its politics, its feuds, and its ordinary men and women. Few of the year's novels have been less exciting and more convincing. Sinclair Lewis's *Gideon Planish* (Cape, 9s. 6d.) is another of the scoundrels the author loves to portray. He is a publicist, and a hypocrite; I couldn't stomach Gideon, as one can revel in Elmer Gantry; his betrayals and insincerities are rather nauseating, however agreeably the author chortles over them. A more interesting exposé is Hamilton Basso's *Horns of a goat* (Constable, 8s. 6d.). This story of the Huey Long administration in Louisiana is most convincing. Its description of the peculiar election tactics of the governor's "machine" would be almost farcical if we did not know it for reality; and the novel shows how Fascism may rise, and flourish, beneath the cloak of "Americanism." James Cain's *Mildred Pierce* (Hale, 8s. 6d.) has these famous last words—"let's get stinko!" From this we may conclude that this is the mixture as before. There is plenty of drink and sex and action, but the author shows a remarkable knowledge of the wholesale pie business and the making of coloratura sopranos. This is a "tough" novel with a difference, its description of life in that fabulous land California may be rather unpleasant, but it rings true. Whether William Saroyan's *The human comedy* (Faber, 8s. 6d.) is his first novel or his latest book of short stories is immaterial. It is so loosely constructed that it may be either. Yet this book shows all Saroyan's virtues—the faith he has in human beings, his joy in the ordinary happenings of life. He is sentimental—yes, but so was Dickens at times, and Saroyan is American Dickens, thumping one on the shoulder, shouting that life is good, people are wonderful, and America is promises. Only a curmudgeon could fail to gain enjoyment from this book.

One remarkable book of short stories has come from America this year. Eudora Welty will be known to readers of *Horizon* and her book *A curtain of green* (Lane, 7s. 6d.) will confirm the impression that here is a new writer of merit. These are stories of atmosphere rather than plot, of neurosis, and of odd people. There is a devastating satire, *The petrified man*, with its conversation in a hairdresser's: a curious happening in a garden, a study of a small railway station. They are haunting, these stories, and I look forward with interest to Miss Welty's next book. Sylvia Townsend Warner is well known for her fantastic novels; her short stories, *A garland of straw* (Chatto, 8s. 6d.) are stories of reality, slight things for the most part, but ingenious in style and matter. Alun Lewis is a writer of the new Welsh school and his first collected volume is *The last inspection* (Routledge, 7s. 6d.). Many of these stories are of army life, others have a Welsh setting. They have a sort of laconic poetry about them, and the writer has a keen sense of the significance of ordinary speech. The title story is full of ironic humour, the trilogy *It's a long way to go* is an authentic study of army life, as is *Lance Jack*; these are the more notable stories in a very interesting volume. Cyril Connolly is the editor of a selection of *Horizon stories* (Faber, 8s. 6d.). It shows a fine range of talent, with many new names. Here are early appearances of Eudora Welty, J. Maclaren-Ross, Arturo Barea, and Alfred Perlés. The stories are most varied, and though few are masterpieces, this is the outstanding collection of the year.

Last of all, humour. It is difficult for a writer to be humorous in war time unless he is either satiric or escapist. Michael Barsley is a satirist, and *The intimate papers of Colonel Bogus* (Pilot Press, 5s.), with the author's Thurberish drawings, is as funny as its predecessors. Here are the Rizkriegers again, the Colonel, Sir Maximus Merger and his fellows. I like Barsley's puns: his civil servant who said "Never commit yourself—

## The Library Assistant

Committee yourself—" should be familiar enough. G. W. Stonier's *Shaving through the blitz* (Cape, 6s.) is satire with a tinge of surrealism. To those who have followed Fanfarlo through the pages of *Penguin New writing*, the book will be familiar. To others it is heartily recommended, for it is witty, penetrating, original and odd. Compton Mackenzie in *Keep the home guard turning* (Chatto, 8s. 6d.) turns again to Scotland, and this surprising story of the rivalries of the Home Guards of Great Todday and Little Todday contains much quiet fun. Quiet, I say, for we seldom reach the uproarious humour of *Monarch of the glen*, and then only when Ben Nevis and his henchmen appear. But this is a good Mackenzie, for all that. Ludwig Bemelman's *I love you, I love you, I love you* (Hamish Hamilton, 7s. 6d.) is completely escapist. The fun is pre-war: the royal suite on the *Normandie*, the Ritz, the Place Vendôme; it's all most enjoyable, and one cannot afford to miss Bemelman's wonder child, his valets, his international thieves and his extraordinary drawings. H. B. Creswell's humour in *Grig in retirement* (Faber, 9s. 6d.) is as English as a pint of bitter, but it is good strong bitter with a pre-war tang. At the same time, we are given an education in the points of good building. I have recommended Mr. Creswell's books to many people; all, whether interested in architecture or not, have enjoyed them. Who could fail to relish old Grigblay, that fine craftsman, Fred Bloggs, the foremost of foremen, or the Irish architect, Dennis O'Braughan? Of special interest to librarians will be the acrid discussion in council of the "proposed extensions to the public library." Here is a thoroughly enjoyable book, original, and full of humour.

A number of interesting and important critical works have appeared during the year. Slightest, yet most endearing of them all, is Max Beerbohm's *Lytton Strachey* (C.U.P., 1s. 6d.), a tribute from the Peter Pan of letters to that ironic historian. This is a lecture, and one can imagine Max's hoarse voice we know so well from the radio delivering these well-rounded phrases. I know this book sent me again to *Queen Victoria* and *Eminent Victorians*—so I judge it a success. Denis Val Baker's *Little reviews* (Allen and Unwin, 2s.) is a work on a new subject, the hundreds of small periodicals that have appeared during the last twenty or thirty years. The author knows all of them, he sums up their characteristics, details their contributors and assesses their influence. The only review missing is *Story*—that most stylish of little magazines. This is an able excursion into the byways of modern literature. Douglas Goldring's *South lodge* (Constable, 15s.) gives us an intimate view of a remarkable literary and social controversy—the alliance of Violet Hunt and Ford Madox Ford. Mr. Goldring writes with knowledge and vivacity. He describes Ford and the gallant band he gathered round him in the *English review*. The book should direct readers to the neglected novels of Ford, and especially to the superb Tietjen's quadrilogy. Alfred Kazin's *On native grounds* (Cape, 21s.) is the first grown-up history of modern American literature I have come across. The author analyses without hair-splitting and interprets without being a bore; he is unacademic and yet free from the gush of the coterie-critic. There are no writers of significance omitted. Mr. Kazin's judgments seem to me to be sound and his studies of Hemingway, Steinbeck and Dos Passos are especially good. Here is a book for every librarian who cherishes his literature section; it will prove a stimulus to wide reading—surely one of our objects.

### The County Scene

Mary Piggott

It occurred to me that if Mr. McColvin found it necessary to suggest that most county branch libraries should become "District Libraries"\* the idea must be unfamiliar to many people, and that an account of how district libraries work in one county system might be of interest.

Here it is the practice for membership of the District Library to be open to residents in the surrounding rural area and for the District Librarian to assume responsibility for village centres in the whole of the area which regards the town served by the Branch as its natural centre. Housewives shopping, and men and women having business in the town can thus see a much larger selection of books than is possible in the village centres and will request assistance from the branch staff more readily than from a voluntary local librarian and, naturally, will find a professional response more helpful. The branch stock is indeed good, as the needs of the whole district are considered in the allocation of new books, and a district branch has priority over other branches serving the same urban population but having no additional rural area. It seems worth while to keep a good reference section in a district branch; in one branch, at least, situated in a market town, this section is noticeably busier on a market-day.

Running library centres from a district branch instead of from headquarters enables much closer contact to be maintained between village readers and the library staff. Visits to centres ought to be frequent enough for the library staff to become familiar with each centre and its peculiar tastes. Conversation with the local librarians usually reveals an immense enthusiasm for their work and a readiness to suggest improvements and to adopt suggestions, and borrowers can eventually be coaxed into revealing their preferences, although it takes a great deal of perseverance to discover that such a sweeping dismissal of the entire stock as "nothing here worth reading" really means that the borrower's dominating (but undivulged) interest in motor-racing or Egyptian tombs is not represented. Once borrowers get over their surprise at receiving books in response to individual requisitions, lists of requests may be expected with each month's returns of issues when they are forwarded to the district branch. Requisitions from centres are dealt with in the normal way—supplied from stock or requisitioned from headquarters and passed on to the centre at the next exchange. Centre borrowers can be advised of new additions to branch stock through lists which the editor of the local paper is generally willing to print. Sandwiched between the obituaries and the weddings a library list gets more readers than one would suppose.

Regular exchanges at short intervals of part of the centre stock are essential; monthly exchanges of fifty to one hundred books, according to the size of the centre, have proved to be worth the labour involved, and yet Mr. McColvin reports only one county where this is the normal procedure.† This monthly exchange of stock keeps pace with regular readers who would otherwise soon exhaust all the books which appealed to them on the centre shelves. It also enables centre borrowers to have books which are in great demand in *their turn*, instead of coming at the tail-end of a waiting list, since books can be sent as monthly loans to centres and be back in circulation at the branch after the next exchange. It is necessary also to have a thorough turn-out of stock and replace all, or a large part, of the non-fiction stock with new titles. Reading

\* The Public Library System of Great Britain, page 25.

† *Ibid*, page 20.

## The Library Assistant

definitely increases after such spring-cleaning. Books in the same place, on the same shelf, grow weekly more wearisome to look at ; transferred to another centre the lure of the unknown endues them with renewed attraction.

If the number of centres served by one branch is considerable it is a great advantage to have a library van (which may be shared between two or three branches). The van calls regularly according to schedule, arriving at a particular centre at the same hour of the same day of the week on each visit, so that borrowers who are at liberty and wish to do so, know when to come and assist in choosing the books for their exchange from the stock displayed in the van. Visits in the van also enable a member of the district staff to meet the centre librarians regularly and much more frequently than is possible when public transport or cycling is the only means of reaching the centres. It is thus possible to keep in touch with local interests and to bring books or information for any particular occasion.

A great extension of the library service to rural areas is made practicable when a district library runs its own van : small hamlets or isolated houses may then be served directly from the van, routes being modified to include such stops, where individuals and families may borrow from what is, in effect, a travelling miniature branch library.

## Examinations

W. M. Dickie

EXAMINATIONS exist to be passed, and there is a technique about passing examinations, as there is about other activities of life. It is hoped that the following rules and hints, which are presented under two main heads, viz. (1) Method of Study, (2) Sitting Examinations, will be useful to candidates for the examinations of the Library Association. It may be said that the advice given is somewhat too utilitarian and realistic and that the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake is ignored, but let it be remembered that knowledge and the pleasures that it brings are not inconsistent with a course and manner of study shaped by urgent practical necessity.

**Method of Study.**—(1) Discover as accurately as possible the nature and scope of the examination. To do this you must study the syllabus as set out in the *Year Book* of the Library Association, but above all you must study previous examination papers. The syllabus is very detailed, whereas examination papers are more selective. Studied comparatively, they show the more important topics that tend to recur ; their great merit is that they are the syllabus as it works out in practice.

(2) It may sometimes happen that an examiner has published books or articles on the subject in which he is examining. If so, read these books or articles. They will indicate his general tendency of thought, and aspects of the subject that specially interest him. You may not agree with his views in every particular, but it is at least well to know them.

(3) Read with the purpose of making the most of the examination, as you judge that examination will be. If you do this, you will soon discover that some books are much more important to you than others. You will also discover that some portions of a book are more important than others. Concentrate on the most important, and recognise the less important to be such.

## The Library Assistant

(4) Many students mark specially important passages in their text-books. This is an excellent, if unaesthetic, practice. Looking through a book which he has marked in this way, a reader gets a valuable conspectus of the subject dealt with. He sees it as a whole without the distraction of numerous details.

(5) Omit entirely those parts of a book that are irrelevant to your purpose. It is misplaced conscientiousness to read a book from beginning to end merely for the sake of being thorough. A regulated thoroughness studies thoroughly only what bears on the examination which you have in view.

(6) It may be taken for certain that you will not be able to consult all the books mentioned in the long lists in the *Year Book*. You need have no anxiety on this account. Select the books most useful to the purpose in hand and study them.

(7) As a result of your scrutiny of previous examination papers you will have noticed that certain questions tend to recur in varying forms. These questions are on a variety of important topics, and you should be quite certain, before the day of examination arrives, that you are able to deal with them.

**Sitting Examinations.**—(1) Given at least a normally efficient memory, it is desirable to come fresh to an examination. Given, however, a bad memory, it may be impossible not to have a long session on the previous night. If yours is this latter case, you may feel that you have to rely mainly on recency of impression. The candidate must settle this question for himself and, if at all possible, decide on rest rather than on late and concentrated revision.

(2) Be in your place some minutes before the hour of the examination. You will thus be able to settle down and be ready to tackle the examination paper as soon as you are given it.

(3) Have a watch and place it on the desk before you. You must constantly and expeditiously remind yourself how time is going.

(4) When you receive the examination paper, read the whole of it as quickly as you can consistent with care and understanding. It is well to face the paper as a whole, for by doing so you will have taken its measure and feel ready for the attack. If there is a choice of questions, as is usually the case, you will mark those which you have decided to answer. Avoid "wishful thinking"; do not wrest a question from its true significance and read into it some other question which might well have been set and which you could answer easily.

(5) Having carried out these preliminaries, you must divide the time remaining into equal portions corresponding to the number of questions. Do not, however, be absolutely bound by your time-table. You may find some questions easier than others, and therefore you may gain on them, but be very wary of exceeding your allocation by much. To discover, for example, that there is only a minute or two left for your last answer is unpardonable. You are certain to gain more marks by successfully tackling an additional question than by elaborating your response to one already fairly fully dealt with. In examinations, as in economics, there is a law of diminishing return.

(6) In questions of the more general type as distinct from those of the more specific and practical kind, it is an excellent plan first to jot down the points which you wish to make. If you then deal with these in logical order, your answer will have coherence and clarity, and carry conviction.

## The Library Assistant

(7) Allow time for re-reading your answers.

(8) Be self-honest. Do not persuade yourself that you are writing to a question, when you really know you are writing beside it. If you do not know an answer, do not instead give another, even if related, answer. Keep to the point. You will gain no marks by doing otherwise, even if you write at length.

(9) Lastly, let me repeat another's advice, which is applicable to all your answers: "Be brief, be brief, be not too brief."

## Correspondence

### POST-WAR PROBLEMS

The Editor, *The Library Assistant*.

Sir,—

I have received an airgraph and a letter from Signalman Keyworth—apparently a third message has gone astray—on the questions he and others in the Forces are asking.

"The main point, of course, is the interruption of professional education. . . ."

"Are we, in spite of much longer experience, to be penalised . . . ?"

"The Government has some scheme to foster professional education after the war. How does this apply to us ?"

The Library Association, in the *Record* for October, 1943, presented a memorandum by the Council dealing with these questions.

1. Ex-Service Personnel (p. 177). "The war has interrupted the training of a great many of those engaged in library work, and steps must be taken to enable these members to complete and extend their training as quickly as possible. No attempt will, however, be made to facilitate registration by any means other than by study and examination. It is hoped that Government grants will be available for ex-service library personnel to enable them to complete their professional training and to take degree courses; grants for library training will not however be forthcoming unless library schools are actually in being, and there must be as little delay as possible, therefore, in setting them up."

Also, the Council envisage whole-time courses, serial courses, whole-day courses, correspondence courses and pre-demobilisation courses, all at or from library schools, established at places where half the training during the school year, would be practical work at a large library, and which schools would be associated with a University. The scheme has two main objects: (a) to raise the status and qualifications of the professional librarian, and (b) to substitute whole-time study at library schools for spare-time study after working hours during the major part of training.

An enquiry is suggested among serving members to ascertain which of the courses they would be likely to support.

2. The Government Grant Scheme is outlined in "Further Education and Training Scheme," authorised by the Minister of Labour, President of the Board of Education, Minister of Agriculture and Secretary of State for Scotland—and copies can be obtained from the Board of Education.

*Objects* (paras. 1 and 2).—The provision of financial assistance to enable suitably qualified men and women on demobilisation to undertake or continue further education, i.e. beyond the Secondary School Standard.

*Persons Eligible* (paras. 3 to 10).—In addition to having full-time effective service during the war, the applicant must show that he or she has: (a) been unable to start

## The Library Assistant

training ; (b) has suffered interruption or diversion of a career ; (c) is unable to resume or continue a career ; (d) requires a refresher course to enable him to follow his previous profession.

The candidate must show capabilities or potentialities sufficient to suggest that his training would justify expenditure of public money.

*Further Education and Training* (paras. 11 to 19).—Education beyond the Secondary School Standard may be divided into :—

(1) Courses for those who entered on their war service before either going to a University or entering on a course of training.

(2) Courses for those whose further education has been interrupted or curtailed.

(3) Refresher courses mainly for the older groups.

No hard and fast rule as to the type of work or profession can be laid down, but the basic principle would be that such expenditure must be to the national advantage as well as to the advantage of the candidate. The grant awarded to a successful applicant will vary according to his obligations, resources, and the length and nature of the course ; and the amount will be determined according to scale, and will be dependent upon satisfactory conduct and progress.

*Assessment* (paras. 20-22) will be governed by the following general principles :—

(a) If the applicant is under 21 and unmarried at the date of his application, his parents will be asked to state their income. If this is substantial, it is assumed that the parents will make a suitable contribution.

(b) If over 21, or married, the applicant will be asked to state the occupation of his father and what contribution, if any, his parents are prepared to make.

(c) Private incomes, except disability pay, or pension, or war gratuity, will be taken into account.

(d) Reasonable maintenance allowance will be made in respect of wife and children, if any, subject to some limitation if the applicant or his wife has an income.

The scheme cannot come into force until general demobilisation begins, except in the case of disabled or unfit men.

3. A third paper, dealing with these questions is "The Public Library Service ; its Post-War Reorganisation and Development ; proposals by the Council of the Library Association." Amongst many other things it recommends that "Library workers should comprise of two main categories composed of Technical Staff (Librarians) and Service Staff, provided however, that there are no obstacles to prevent suitable persons passing from one to the other upon fulfilling the necessary conditions." Both categories should be paid according to National scales.

"For post-war entrants, and for those who are already in the employment of Library Authorities, including those whose studies and experience have been interrupted by war service, suitable arrangements for professional education, examination and registration must be made by the Library Association."

"This important work, however, will require the sympathetic interest and practical assistance of local Library Authorities and of the Government, so that on the one hand the general and professional education of suitable candidates shall not be prevented by avoidable limitations, and, on the other, those who are now engaged in the armed forces or other duties essential to the war effort shall not be prejudiced. Necessary facilities, grants, and leave of absence must be such as to provide full opportunities for all suitable persons."

From these extracts it can be seen that the problems of Library Assistants serving in the forces have received serious consideration. If I can be of further assistance my address is the Public Library, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs. H. C. CAISTOR.



## The Library Assistant

The Editor, *The Library Assistant*.

B.N.A.F.

Sir,—

I feel moved belatedly to write to you, as Editor of the *Assistant*, on the subject of the L.A. post-war programme for professional education, especially since the joint meeting of the Home Counties' Branch of 28th November. Several points, I fear, are in danger of being overlooked. (The fact that one is in the Forces is, agreed, a handicap in these matters: one is less aware of immediate policies. On the other hand, one's sense of values is probably enhanced, and living in such close intimacy with one's peace-time *clientele* is, after all, no bad training.)

Too much is again being made of the degree fetish and of the saving grace of a full-time library school, and I feel strongly on these subjects as a tutor, a graduate and a diplomate of both the L.A. and the School of Librarianship.

Degrees are very nice qualifications to have, no doubt, but they may mean very little. They are the fruits rather than the creators of a well-balanced mind: any plodder can obtain one if he can only find an accommodating enough minor university. But cramming and plodding are not passports to culture. Education, truly considered, is surely as wide as life itself, and the result, not of so many text-books learnt and lecture notes scanned, as of book-learning related to experience and practice, of a first-hand study of humanity and human institutions, of wise travel, of a free exchange of views and ideas with one's fellows.

You see, I have met too many people (though I do not suggest that they form a majority) who, having taken a degree (maybe no more than a useless pass degree), consider themselves uncommonly qualified to play a lead in the profession; and there are others, too, who regard them enviously. . . . Away with degree-hunters and degree-snobs! I've met far more naturally cultured people in the ranks—one or two public school men, several ex-miners, commercial travellers and such, and I have felt abashed in their presence. Although our life-work be books, let us not worship book-learning.

And as to full-time library schools. Professional education has, in the past, been based largely on full-time library work in conjunction with evening study, and I can see little at fault with a system which allows the assistant, say, an afternoon and an evening per week to attend a library school or evening institute. Theory and practice then go, as they definitely should, hand in hand. . . . At least one year's full-time library school training, divorced from practical work? That sounds to me very like a year's laze. It would seem to me that if your assistant declares that he has no time for spare-time study, then he is simply not worth his salt. What is important, however, is to see that all assistants have equal facilities for attending lectures and study: at the moment, London and the Midlands are abnormally well endowed.

Various other points occur, but the confines of an air-letter forbid enlargement. This invidious differentiation into two grades of staff again throws into relief the tendency in British public libraries of assistants, as they mount the professional scale, to become more and more isolated from the public with whom they should, in reality, seek every opportunity of contact. (The unqualified juniors usually bear the brunt of this.) Again, why delay the age of entrance into the profession to 17-18, when the average entrant matriculates at 16? Why not introduce planned staff interchanges, not only in Britain, but with U.S.A., Sweden, Russia?

And, if we allow the principle of grants for library school education, what of the economic position of the wage-earner, and why leave the scheme at the mercy of *permissive* legislation? And, finally, why the lack of emphasis on cataloguing and classification in the revised syllabus, with its otherwise welcome innovations?

Yours sincerely, A. J. WALFORD.



## The Library Assistant

Canada.

The Editor, *The Library Assistant*.

Sir,—

Now is the youth of England all on fire. In the May issue of the *Assistant*, Mr. T. W. Muskett (R.A.F.) was moved to quote King's Regulations for the arrangement of books in R.A.F. station libraries. Mr. Muskett was not in favour of this arrangement. Neither was I, but I ventured to point out that, after all, the maintenance of station libraries was not considered one of the most important objects of the combatant services, and that the size of most unit libraries and the qualifications of the librarian—if any—did not warrant the use of a professional classification system.

In the cause of brevity I appear to have sacrificed some clarity, or so it would appear from a letter by a Mr. R. Wright of Tooting, in the September issue. Mr. Wright of Tooting is, and laudably so, a seeker after perfection in all things, and I fear he is rather disappointed in the Royal Air Force for not fulfilling his earnest expectations. Furthermore, he is so rash as to compare the practice of librarianship with that of cookery, which is a service subject far more dear to the hearts and other organs of officers and men alike. The fact remains, regrettable as it is, that in a struggle for national existence the arrangement of books in service libraries must of necessity take secondary place, and under these trying circumstances the Canons of Classification hold no charm for the authorities concerned.

It is unfortunate, however, that Mr. Wright of Tooting should consider me as in agreement with the enemies of professional progress. I seek to explain, but not to condone, the vagaries of an otherwise noteworthy service—vagaries which, I believe, are to be experienced in varying degrees in all of our fighting forces. I have, however, succeeded in my own unit in applying the Dewey classification to the station reference library of approximately 1,000 volumes; and thanks mainly to the pioneering work of the Canadian Legion Educational Services, the Royal Canadian Air Force has recommended the adoption of Dewey in all station libraries. There is even now a R.C.A.F. trade of "Clerk (Library)," although this is intended to be recruited chiefly from the Women's Division. I have no information as to whether similar innovations may be expected in the Royal Air Force.

I would point out that such recognition as has been accorded to professional methods in Canada has been the result of work not by the Canadian Library Council, but by a non-professional organisation which has availed itself of professional advice and assistance. It is a statement sad but true that there is as yet no public library unity in Canada, and the Legion Library Services are laying the groundwork for much useful post-war development. In England, however, the Library Association may be said to have achieved that unity of spirit which is essential to progress. We in the Services hear much, and are heartened thereby, of the work British Libraries are doing in spite of—maybe because of—war-time conditions. In our own restricted Service capacity we are striving to keep contact and to parallel your progress; but to most of us at times it must seem that our efforts are unwept, unhonoured and most certainly far-flung. It is not, then, for the Library Association and its non-serving members, who have more freedom of criticism than enlisted librarians, to impress upon the military educationists the value of that expert knowledge which Mr. Wright of Tooting so justifiably extols?

Yours faithfully, H. T. MEDD.

The Editor, *The Library Assistant*.

London, N.5.

Dear Sir,—

Mr. Walford's paper in the last issue of the *Assistant*, on cataloguing, raises once again the everlasting question of the difficulties which face students sitting for the cataloguing examination.

## The Library Assistant

The examination requires familiarity with the working of both the Dictionary and Classified Catalogues, and as things are students have to build up a mental picture of both catalogues based upon the explanations of the text-books and lecturers. This is no easy thing to do, and the fact that numbers of students are familiar with one of the two types merely serves, in my experience, to make it more difficult to envisage clearly the other type, whichever it happens to be. I am therefore rather sceptical of the value of a series of articles and papers as explanatory measures, and I should like to suggest that it would be more worth while to make it more easily possible for students to pay visits to libraries which have either type of catalogue in good working order, so that they can see for themselves exactly how they both work in practice. It seems to me that once a student has actually seen and handled, say, a Classified Catalogue at work, he will much better appreciate the job it sets out to do and the way it tries to do it, and will find it that much easier to deal with the practical cataloguing problems which confront him in the examination.

No doubt the immediate answer will be that there is nothing to stop any student who so wishes to go and see a catalogue at work, but as far as I can see, there is little knowledge, even among lecturers, of where good specimens of catalogues are to be found. I made such an enquiry a year ago and was referred to the examples quoted in *Sharp*; no information could be obtained as to what specific libraries either inside London or outside, had good specimens of the Dictionary or Classified Catalogues, and short of actually trailing round all the public libraries to find out, apparently there was nothing to be done.

It would be interesting to find out whether other students agree with my analysis of the position. If they do not, then nothing more need be said; but if they do, then our first need is a list of libraries showing the types of catalogue used. This list should, in fairness, embrace the whole country, so as to include all the students outside London. If it were possible to indicate at the same time which libraries have well-kept and efficient catalogues, and which are not such good specimens, the way would then be open for all students to familiarise themselves with either or both types of catalogue, according to which they found difficult to deal with.

I should like to know whether anything on these lines has been done before, since there is no virtue in duplicating work; any information on this score would be most helpful.

Yours faithfully, REGINALD J. HOY.

The Editor, *The Library Assistant*.

B.N.A.F.

Sir,—

How it was done I do not know, and whether the Library Association had any hand in the matter again I am in ignorance. But whoever was responsible deserves the notice of your readers. During the German occupation of Tunis the bookshops and public library were full of books on German "kultur" and the benevolent wishes of the Fatherland to do everything it could for the people of countries it had to protect. Then came the day when the Derbyshire Yeomanry raced the Hussars up the Avenue de Paris. Less than four days later the library and bookshops were full of translations of Remarques' *Flotsam* and similar books. Maybe it was the people themselves who had been hoarding these books. But whoever it was I think the Library Association should take steps to see that when we invade Europe, a whole host of books proclaiming the truth follows to put some light in the darkness made by the Germans. It is a point that seems to have been ignored.

Yours sincerely, ANDRE G. SHEPHERD  
(late Kent County Library).